

Real or Not Real?

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Summary: Mabel has been suffering for a long time. Dipper's been suffering too. When his mother reveals her plans regarding the future of his sister's care, Dipper will do anything to make sure they aren't seen through. Protective!Dipper. Older!Dipper. Older!Mabel. Warnings inside.

1. Prologue

Warnings: Depictions of mental illness and the stigma involved with it. _

Mrs. Pines had a difficult choice to make.

For five years, she had watched both of her children suffer. Ever since they had come home from that summer trip to Oregon.

It had started slowly, started small. A nervous tapping of her son's foot, her daughter's sudden and extreme distaste for eighties music. Things that had seemed strange, but not completely abnormal for children entering puberty. She had brushed them off.

But now she clutched the phone in her hand and listened to her daughters pained screams ringing through the house, debating whether or not to call Dipper.

She was getting worse every day, and he was the only one who was ever able to bring her back to reality. Each time she spiraled out, he could bring her back so easily, so quickly.

But he was away at college. It would be hours on a bus before he'd be anywhere close to Piedmont, and he'd miss classes.

And Mrs. Pines knew that if Dipper had any idea of what state his sister was in right now, this would be a sacrifice he'd make without thinking.

She didn't want to do that to him. She knew that Dipper would give up the world for his twin, but she never wanted him to. He deserved to have a life just as much as Mabel did.

But as another round of screaming started from Mabel's room above her, Mrs. Pines knew she had no choice.

Dipper arrived home late that night, but the eighteen year old smiled when he noticed that his mother had left the porch light on for him.

He had heard Mabel's screaming in the background of the phone call he had gotten from his mother that morning. He wondered how she was doing now.

Unlocking the door, the first thing he noticed was silence. She had stopped screaming. Closing the door behind him, he slipped off his shoes and bound quietly up the stairs, his school bag slung over one shoulder. The lights inside the house had all been turned off; everyone had gone to bed.

Dropping his backpack in his bedroom, he made his way to the hallway bathroom that he shared with Mabel. Turning on the taps, he splashed warm water on his face before looking up at his reflection.

Dipper Pines' face was constantly in a state of, "oh shit, I should probably shave soon". He had a sort of permanent scruffiness to him that his mother and sister both hated, but he swore the girls at school kind of liked. And for being quite short as a kid, he had grown to a decent height, needing to bend over the sink to get a good look in the mirror. Sighing, Dipper brushed his teeth, combed his hair, and made his way over to Mabel's room.

The door to his sister's bedroom was ajar. He tapped on it softly. No reply came, but he entered anyway.

Dipper used to live in here, back when they shared a room. The decor had gotten much girlier since he moved out when they'd started high school, but there were still two single beds instead of one larger one.

Mabel occupied the bed under the window. She was curled up in a ball, facing away from him, but the moonlight that shone in from the window over her gave Dipper enough light to see that her hair was still wet.

He moved quietly over to her, bringing himself down to sit gently on the edge of the bed. He could smell her orange scented shower gel. She must have showered and gone to bed recently.

"Mabel," he whispered, "are you awake?"

"Mmm, Dipper?" Mabel stirred a bit, turning her head to face him "Why are you here?"

"Mom called, Mabel. I heard you had a rough day."

"DipDop, you can't take a 5 hour bus ride home every time I have a rough day it's not-"

"If it wasn't urgent she wouldn't have called." Dipper insisted, a look of concern on his face, "Are you feeling any better?"

"Yeah, well, a little. I still have that fuzzy feeling, but I got up and had a shower and I guess I calmed down enough to sleep. I know that was real because I can still smell the soap and I think this is real because you're here." Mabel's brow was furrowed and she looked confused.

Sighing, Dipper took his twin's hand and squeezed it, "Yes, Mabel. You know he could never replicate me. You know you'd see right though it if he did. You know that."

He felt her relax beside him, feeling bad for not having noticed how tensed her body had become. He rubbed his thumb lightly over the back of her hand.

"You sound sleepy, silly goose. Have you been up late studying all week again? Dipper, if I find one more chewed shirt in the trash I'm calling an intervention!"

Dipper never quite got used to how quickly his sister could go from stress and worry to her normal, bubbly self, but he was beyond thankful every time. He felt himself relax too.

"Yeah, dude, college is awesome. I wish you could have gone. You learn so much and I'm sure you'd get along with everyone there."

"Well don't learn too much, Dipper. You'll melt your brain and it'll drip out your ears and you'll see that you have a lot more in common with that paper-jam clone of yours than you realized."

"I'll take it easy, I promise. Here," he said, standing up and removing his flannel shirt, "You take this, it'll prove I was here if you wake up in the night. Do you mind if I sleep in my room or do you want me here?"

"Nah, go enjoy your own bed Dipper, I think I'll be okay."

"Alright then, you know where to find me though." He handed her his shirt. She wadded it up into a ball, holding it tightly.

Dipper punched her lightly on the side of the head, "Bwoooooop", he said, winking at her.

Mabel's eyes were already closed, but the soft moonlight from the window let him see her relaxed smile. He shut the door behind him, and headed for bed.

Authors Note/Disclaimer: Okay, guys! This is my very first Gravity Falls fic! Woo! I just wanted to do a little bit of a touch-base since this fic will be dealing with some pretty heavy stuff. You've probably already noticed that it will be dealing with PTSD and other mental illnesses. While I have suffered with anxiety and depression personally, I have NEVER suffered from PTSD. As such, I will likely get some things wrong and if anyone out there is reading this and has suffered or is suffering from PTSD please know that 1) I am still learning and would never try to intentionally misrepresent a mental illness, and 2) if you have any input, concerns or advice please

message me so that I can be as accurate as possible. Thanks guys and enjoy!

2. Chapter One

"I am so sorry you had to come home, sweetheart."

"Mom, you're the one that called me"

Dipper was sitting at the kitchen island, mouthful of pancakes while his mother stood over at the stove, flipping away. She had a hand on her hip, and despite the sunny weather, was not in a good mood.

"I know I did Dipper, but I'm just at the end of my rope with your sister," she piled two more pancakes onto his plate and he glared at her, "and don't you give me that look! It isn't fair that you have to keep missing school just so we can keep her in check. It isn't fair that she is a legal adult and spends all her time cooped up in that room. She doesn't have a job, she doesn't go to school!"

"It isn't her fault mom!" Dipper said through gritted teeth, "She's very sick, she can't pick out reality from fantasy. Do you not see how that can be a little bit scary to a person?"

"Of course I do! I know she's sick Dipper," Mrs. Pines sighed, leaning against the kitchen counter, "but she hasn't gotten any better! I'm starting to think we should be looking into some sort of inpatient treatment."

"No way." Dipper couldn't believe what he was hearing. His sister would not be sent to a psych ward. "Mom. I will take her back to school with me. I can take care of her. She's not going to live in some nut house with a bunch of potentially dangerous psychopaths. No."

"Dipper, sweetie," his mother's voice grew softer, and she leaned across the island to take one of his hands in her own, "You're wonderful with her. I don't know where she would be without you, you help her so much. But she needs professional help so that she doesn't need you to be able to cope on her own. Something happened to her, to both of you, that summer you went to Gravity Falls. Dipper, if you really care about her, you'll tell me what went on there. Both of you need professional help and you need to talk about it."

"I can't, mom."

"Dipper--"

"Mom," Dipper was beyond frustrated now, "You need to trust me that I want the best for Mabel. Getting it out there would only make life worse for her, I need you to trust me."

"I do trust you, honey." Dipper could see that his mother was reaching her limit too, he could see bags under her eyes "But you aren't a psychologist or a social worker and you don't know what's best for her. We've tried everything else, she isn't getting better. This might help her!"

"I'm telling you, it won't mom."

"Sometimes I wonder if it was a good idea to leave you kids with Stan Pines. Dipper, look at me. Did he getâ€| too close to your sister? You can tell me honey, it's okay-"

Dipper stood up abruptly. This was it; he was turning to his last resort. The idea that had been brewing in his mind for a long time now, the thing he never wanted to do, but it was probably Mabel's last chance at getting better, at living a normal life.

He stormed out of the kitchen, throwing his fork onto his plate, giving his mother a look of disgust as he exited. But he moved as gently as he could up the stairs and into Mabel's bedroom.

Mabel used to be a morning person, but she got increasingly less sleep nowadays, often up late worrying about something or other. Dipper sat on the edge of her bed and prodded her awake, just as he had the night previous.

"Hey, sleepyhead," he said softly, picking the flannel shirt he'd left with her off the floor and putting a fistful of it into her open hand, pushing her fingers closed around the fabric, "how much do you trust me?"

"Bucketloads, awakey-head," she yawned and turned away from him, slightly annoyed at being woken up.

"Okay, then I need you to do me a huge favour," he saw her perk up at this, he knew she usually felt pretty useless and anything that she could do for him, she'd do without question, "throw on some clothes, and get into our car. We're going on an adventure Just... try not to make too much noise and don't say anything to mom. Please. Just get in the car and lock the door."

She sat up and rubbed her eyes, slowly getting out of bed. He made his way to the bathroom, throwing all her meds into one of her colourful makeup bags. Toothbrushes, floss, deodorant, they could buy all that stuff on the way. He wanted to get out of here as soon as possible. He went back to her room and she had already gone, he could hear their mother screaming at her outside, telling her to get out of the car. He shoved some of her favourite sweaters, t-shirts, and a couple pairs of jeans into a backpack for her, as well as some socks and underwear, and, with a grimace, someâ€| lady products, in case she needed them.

He slung the hot pink, unicorn printed backpack over his shoulder, and made his way to his own bedroom. He grabbed his own backpack, which was still packed since arriving home last night, and opened his desk drawer. Inside an old, beat up, pencil case was his life savings. Money from birthdays and Hanukkahs and Christmases and fast-food jobs that he'd been saving for some sort of emergency. It was a fair amount of money, made up of crisply folded twenty's, enough to support himself and his twin for an indefinite amount of time. Shoving them in his wallet, along with his emergency credit card, he stormed down the stairs and to the front driveway.

"Dipper, where the hell do you think you're going with her?" his mom demanded. Mabel was sitting in the passenger side of the barely-used car they had shared through high school. Her eyes were large and she looked extremely confused, but defiant and determined

to be doing something other than freaking out in her bedroom for once.

Dipper gave her a reassuring look, and turned back to their mother.

"Mom, I'm taking Mabel for a couple weeks. Look â€" it's almost spring break anyway, I won't be missing much school. I have an idea that might help her."

"Dipper, she's so fragile. You know that. She shouldn't be awayâ€"|"

"Mom, I promise, if we come back and she isn't even a tiny bit better you can take her to an inpatient hospital or whatever you think is best, I won't stop you. Just let me try this first. I really think it'll help mom, honest, you know I wouldn't do anything that I thought might hurt her."

"Where are you going? You aren't taking her back to Oregon, Dipper, no way, I won't allow it-"

But Dipper walked calmly toward the car, and heard the click of Mabel unlocking the drivers-side door for him. Handing the two backpacks over to her, he climbed in himself.

"I'll have my phone on the whole time, mom. I'll call you if anything happens and I'll bring her straight back if she gets any worse. I love you."

Slamming the door, he closed his eyes and took a deep, steadying breath. Opening them, he saw that Mabel was looking at him worriedly. Dipper turned the keys in the ignition and backed out of the driveway.

He knew his parents couldn't do anything to stop them. They were both adults, the car was in his name. He had his own money and his credit card was connected to his bank account. He could make it on his own. His twin, not so much, but he could take care of her better than their parents ever could. He gave her a reassuring thump on the shoulder, not taking his eyes off the road.

After about twenty silent minutes of driving, Dipper pulled in to a gas station.

"I'll be right back, do you want anything?" he turned to look at her for the first time since he had pulled out of the driveway. She had earbuds in and was looking out the window with a smile on her face, tapping her foot along to the music. She apparently hadn't heard him. With a small chuckle, he shook his head and got out of the car.

Dipper filled up the tank and went in to the small truck stop to pay for the gas. He also bought a variety of snacks for the long, eight-hour car journey they had ahead of them. Thanking the cashier, he exited the store and pulled out his cell phone, dialing the number of his great uncle.

The kids hadn't really seen their grunkles since they had left Gravity Falls more than five years ago. Hell, their parents to this

day didn't know that one of them even existed. They had exchanged emails over the years, though, as well as snapchats and facebook messages. Dipper had even called Great Uncle Ford a couple of times with questions about homework assignments for college.

"Dipper, m'boy!" Great Uncle Ford's voice always answered after exactly two rings, "What can I do you for? Do you have another question about that one physics class?"

"No, Great Uncle Ford, I uhâ€¦I'm on spring break now, actually. I was wondering if it would be okay if Mabel and I came up to Gravity Falls for a visit? We haven't been in so long and if there's no space or whatever I have enough money to put us up in a motel or somethingâ€¦| We just really wanted to see everybody"

"Of course you can, son! There's always room here for my favourite niece and nephew. When can we expect you?"

"Umâ€¦| today, or uh- this evening. We're still in California, Great Uncle Ford. We, or, I kinda had an argument with my mom and-"

"Dipper, if you're running away, I can't help you. No fugitive harbouring. It's one of my upmost important values-"

"No sir! Not at all, she knows we're gone, we just thought it would be better for us kids to get some fresh air for a change."

"Well, say no more then! Stan and I will be glad to have you, we can even head out to the diner for supper once you get here, so don't you two snack on too much junk on your trip up and spoil your appetites."

"That sounds great, Great Uncle Ford, thank you" Dipper smiled, relieved that they would have somewhere to stay once they got to Gravity Falls.

"Awesome. I'll see you then, Dipper"

"Actually, Great Uncle Ford, uh- before you goâ€¦| I actually did have a question"

"Shoot."

"I was wondering whether it would be possible to repair the memory gunâ€¦| It's â€œuh- I thought it would be a cool piece for a psych course I'm taking"

"Dipperâ€¦| If I didn't think so highly of you I'd be very dubious of you motives. Butâ€¦| I have already repaired the gun. Not to use, of course, but after your Great Uncle Stan and I got back from our uhm.. fishing trip.. I got sort of bored. My research completed, my work done. I spent an afternoon mending the gun. It's in my office now if you want to have a look at it and take some pictures for your class."

"That'd actually be perfect, thanks a lot, Great Uncle Ford."

"Don't mention it, Dipper. I'll see you tonight. Goodbye son."

"Bye."

Dipper hung up the phone and climbed back into the car in high spirits. His plan was working out perfectly. The twins were welcome to come back to Gravity Falls, and the memory gun was already mended. This was going to work, he just knew it.

"Dipper," Mabel said quietly from the passenger seat beside him, "Where are we going?"

She had pulled her earbuds out of her ears, and she was staring straight out the windshield, fingers drumming anxiously on the armrest. Some of the relief and joy he'd received from his phone call vanished as he remembered what he was going to have to do once they'd actually arrived at their destination.

"Gravity Falls," he replied, his hand reaching out to take hers, "We're gonna make you all better, Mabel".

End
file.